

Serial No. 09/981238, filed 10/17/2001

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the specification as follows:

Please amend paragraph 2 as follows:

[2] Drive axles typically include a differential gear set to permit relative rotation between the axle shafts during vehicle turns. The differential receives rotational drive from a shaft having a pinion coupled to a ring gear connected to the differential. The shaft may include a yoke opposite the pinion that is connected to a drive or propeller shaft connected to the vehicle transmission. The shaft, in turn, is typically supported by a bearing cage in heavy duty vehicle applications that is secured to the main portion of the axle housing. Through shafts in tandem axle arrangements are also typically supported by a bearing cage.

Please amend paragraph 3 as follows:

[3] Heavy duty drive axles typically have lubricant with a GL5 additive to provide an adequate lubricating film to sufficiently lubricate the pinion, ring gear, and differential. This same lubricant with GL5 additive is also used to lubricate the bearings supporting the shaft in the bearing cage. While GL5 additive is desirable to lubricate the pinion, ring gear, and differential, it is corrosive to bearings and reduces the life of the bearing. Furthermore, a large amount of lubricant with the GL5 additive is needed to lubricate the bearing cage bearings, which is, are, remotely located from the differential. As a result, the ring gear and differential must move through a greater volume of lubricant, which decreases the efficiency due to churning losses. Additionally, GL5 additive has been considered by some to pose an environmental hazard. Therefore, what is needed is a drive axle assembly that reduces the amount of lubricant with GL5 additive while extending the bearing cage bearing life and increasing the efficiency of the drive axle.

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Please amend paragraph 11 as follows:

[11] Referring to Figure 2, a drive axle assembly 18 is shown which corresponds to the rear drive axle 15 in the tandem axle system 10 shown in Figure 1. However, it is to be understood that while the present invention is discussed in terms of a rear drive axle 15 having a pinion shaft 17, the present invention may also be used for front drive axle arrangements in a tandem axle system for either the input shaft or through shaft. The drive axle assembly 18 includes an axle housing 20, which may include a main housing portion 22 and a bearing cage 30 secured in some arrangements, the bearing cage may be integral with the housing 22. This invention may be applied there as well.[[.]] Co-axial axle shafts 24 are supported by the main housing portion 22 and are coupled by a differential 26 in a central portion of the housing 20 for relative rotation. A driven shaft 28 is supported within the bearing cage 30 by bearing assembly 36. The driven shaft 28 may refer to an input shaft 13, a through shaft 14, or a pinion shaft 17. The driven shaft 28, which is a pinion shaft as shown in Figure 2, includes a yoke 32 at one end that is coupled to a drive shaft. A pinion 34 is arranged opposite the yoke 32 on the driven shaft 28 and is coupled to the differential 26. For a through shaft in a front drive axle, the driven shaft 28 may include a feature other than the pinion 34.